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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 005418

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958:N/A

TAGS: PREL PTER SOCI KU

SUBJECT: SADDAM'S SPEECH RALLIES KUWAITIS AGAINST HIM

¶1. SUMMARY. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's December 7 speech to "the sons of the People in Kuwait" has inspired Kuwaitis to rally around their leadership and reaffirm their gratitude for the U.S. military presence, by reminding them of the existential threat he poses to their country. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Saddam's address to "the sons of the people in Kuwait," read on Iraqi television December 7, was billed as an apology but was in fact filled with insults, threats, and incitement. To the extent that it was aimed at Kuwaitis, it has backfired, reminding the Kuwaitis of his pronouncements leading up to the Iraqi invasion in 1990. This has prompted the Kuwaiti people to rally around their leadership and reaffirm support for the American military presence in Kuwait.

¶3. In a special session held December 14, members of the Kuwaiti National Assembly from all political currents categorically rejected the speech and its attempts to drive wedges between Kuwait's people and leadership, and between the Kuwaitis and the U.S. Many speakers noted that the speech was a flagrant violation of the Security Council resolutions and of Beirut Arab Summit. The following remarks were typical of the session:

MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun (independent frequently at odds with the Government): "whoever says that there is a popular rejection of the American presence is lying."

MP Fahd Al-Hajiri (pro-government): "We, as representatives of the Kuwaiti people, support the presence of the friendly troops on our land and we proudly open our hearts for them and they are dear guests."

MP Mezyid Al-Deehani (pro-government): "Foreign troops in Kuwait came to protect our borders in the framework of security agreements. Let Saddam know that the American presence is welcomed by the Kuwaiti people."

MP Meshari Al-Osaimi (liberal): "Saddam's speech is inciting the people against their leadership and the allying troops."

MP Khamis Iqab (independent): "I request the government to take care of the security agreements. We are not colonized and the American presence came as per agreements and treaties and as per our request."

MP Mubarak Al-Duwaila (Islamist): "The foreign presence in Kuwait came to protect Kuwait after the sisterly states proved to be unable to help protect the sisterly country from another sisterly country. It came with the approval of the entire people."

MP Eid Hathal (pro-government): "We hold the foreign presence in high esteem and respect; without it Kuwait would have been wiped out at the hands of Saddam and his clique."

MP Mubarak Snaidih (Islamist): "We affirm our keenness to protect the American and friendly troops in Kuwait and we have to provide them with what they want."

MP Mohammed Al-Khalifa (pro-government): "Foreign troops are present in Kuwait as per the will of the Kuwaiti people and we welcome them."

MP Abdul Wahab Al-Haroun (liberal): "If there have been individual operations (against the foreign troops) this does not mean that they express the feelings of the "Kuwaiti Street" nor that of the Islamic currents which have openly expressed their opinion in today's session."

MP Abdul Aziz Al-Mutawa (independent): "The Iraqi regime should know it is we who have invited the foreign troops to Kuwait within the framework of agreements and treaties to protect Kuwait."

¶4. At the beginning of the session, the First Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad delivered the government's statement in which he said: "The foreign troops did not enter Kuwait as invading or occupying troops but rather as the troops of allied countries which are present in Kuwait - and welcomed by the Kuwaitis - pursuant to agreements and conventions concluded between the

government of the State of Kuwait and the governments of their countries, ratified by the National Assembly. Thanks to these troops, after God Almighty and with the involvement of sisterly states, for the liberation of Kuwait from the heinous barbaric occupation. We hold on to these agreements and the necessity of activating them as the Iraqi regime is still threatening aggression, expansion and violation of sanctities."

15. Kuwaiti NGOs and unions held a rally the evening of December 14 to express their categorical rejection of the speech and their support to their legitimate leadership. Poloff and Pol FSN represented the Embassy on short notice and were given special importance and a warm welcome. The Chairman of the Kuwait Bar Association, who was one of the speakers at the rally, switched to English to express thanks to the American troops who led the coalition in the liberation of Kuwait.

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